

Consciousness Raising Through Media Involvement

Public Relations Strategies & Tactics For Issue Management

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Research: Framing the Issue

- Identify messages and information that move numbers, drive public opinion your way.
- Quantitative research
 - Test messages (yours and your opponents)
 - Measure “moods”
 - Scientific accuracy
- Qualitative research
 - Focus groups
- On the record/documents to prove your messages

Identify Key Audiences/Publics

- Who will be affected by your issue/agenda?
- Who will benefit?
- Who will be harmed? (Your opponents)
- Who must take actions for you to win?

Develop Messages: Proof Points

- What information and messages compel your key audiences to take the actions you need them to take?
- Can you prove your messages are true? (Your opponents will work overtime trying to prove they are false.)
- Key messages — targeted at all audiences
- Secondary messages — customized for a particular audience

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics

Communications Strategies

- Do you need to be very loud, moderately loud, or quiet?
- When do you launch?
- Where do you launch?
- Who are your leaders/co -chairs/spokespersons?
- How do you launch — big bang versus low key?
- Is a coalition approach necessary?
- What mechanisms are in place to manage and sustain the campaign (evaluate, adjust as necessary)?

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics cont'

Communications Tactics

- What are the most effective ways to deliver your messages and information to your target audiences? What does your budget allow?
- What tools are your opponents using, and how must you respond? Does it change your strategy?

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics cont'

Grassroots tactics

- Direct lobbying
- Letters, phone calls and emails to legislators, regulators, the media
- District meetings and local events
- Fund-raising/PAC support)

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics cont'

Earned media tactics

- You must localize the story
- News releases
- News conferences/media roundtables
- Viewpoint columns and letters to the editor
- Editorial board visits

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics cont'

Paid media tactics

- As long as the messages are true and believed, a well-funded paid media campaign can drive public opinion
- Very expensive to be effective

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics cont'

New media tactics

- Web page for awareness, advocacy, and a way to deliver messages and information to the masses with no filtering.
- CDs and DVDs. (Distribute your PowerPoint presentation on a CD. Shoot a video, turn it into DVD for mass distribution.)

Communications Tools: Strategies & Tactics cont'

Collateral materials

- Logo and letterhead
- Media kits
- Fact sheets
- Speech/PowerPoint presentation
- Studies/white papers
- Brochures
- Posters/other signage
- T-shirts, buttons, stickers
- And on and on

Earned Media

Benefits

- It's largely free — other than the fees you pay to people like me!
- It is a FAR more credible information source than paid advertisements. People are skeptical about what they read in the paper and see on TV newscasts, but they are even more skeptical about ads.
- If your agenda or issue is “big” enough, extensive media coverage can help to drive the public debate.

Earned Media cont'

Benefits cont'

- Newspaper editorial pages are not widely read. But people who read them are generally key influencers (voters, community and elected leaders, business executives, higher educated and upper income citizens).
- Let me emphasize: politicians pay attention to what's in the paper.
- You can use it to deliver localized and customized messages.
- Politicians love to be in "good news" stories.

Earned Media cont'

Drawbacks/Challenges

- Ultimately, you have little control over how a story will look, read or sound. You can only try to control the "slant" of the story.
- Your definition of a "good story" is far different than a reporter's definition of a good story.
- Doing it right and doing it a lot takes a lot of time.
- What you are "pitching" better be newsworthy.

Earned Media cont'

Drawbacks/Challenges cont'

- Just like paid media tactics, frequency matters. It takes frequent earned media stories to actually create momentum, one way or the other, for an issue or agenda.
- Just like for roads, maintenance is critical. Out of sight is out of mind. Unless you maintain an earned media campaign, you will soon find yourself out of the news hole.

Recent Campaigns

It's the mix for the fix on 496."

- Strategy: Use earned, paid media and special events with to generate awareness. (Radio ads, legislators touring the construction area and concrete plant, community event at Lugnuts game, news releases, etc.) Moderately loud.

Gas tax increase 1996-97: "Just fix the roads."

- Strategy: Build a broad coalition and launch grassroots and earned media tactics to seek passage of a state gas tax increase. Research was a strong driver of this campaign (public opinion research, TRIP studies). Deafeningly loud.

Recent Campaigns cont'

Michigan Transportation Team

- Strategy: Using a broad coalition of business and transportation industry and government officials to seek increased federal funding for roads. Media events, viewpoint columns, Washington "fly ins"/direct lobbying, PAC support, etc. Relatively quiet.

Racino issue

- Strategy: Use earned media, particularly editorial pages, to pressure the Legislature to reject bills to turn the state's seven horse racetracks into casinos. Moderately loud (but we're prepared to scream!)
